

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 7207

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI

SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES OF THE GOC'S NEW COUNCIL OF STATE

REF: SANTIAGO 6961, SANTIAGO 4745

1. SUMMARY: FORMER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (PDC) LEADER AND MEMBER OF NEW GOC COUNCIL OF STATE FORESEES USE OF NEW BODY AS A PRIMARY INSTRUMENT IN RESTORING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN CHILE. END SUMMARY.

2. AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION JULY 21, AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED WORK OF CHILE'S NEW COUNCIL OF STATE -- WHICH HELD ITS FIRST MEETING ON JULY 14 (SANTIAGO 6961) -- WITH JUAN DE DIOS CARMONA, PDC POLITICAL LEADER WHO RESIGNED HIS PARTY MEMBERSHIP TO SERVE IN THE COUNCIL.

3. CARMONA SAID THAT ACCEPTING MEMBERSHIP IN THE COUNCIL HAD BEEN A VERY HARD DECISION FOR HIM. EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI, PDC ELDER STATESMAN, HAD REFUSED TO SERVE; AND CARMONA REALIZED THAT THERE WAS WIDE SKEPTICISM AMONG PDC MEMBERS AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ANYTHING EFFECTIVE COMING OUT OF THIS PINOCHET CREATION. ONE COULD EASILY CONCLUDE THAT A BODY WHICH COULD TAKE UP ONLY MATTERS REFERRED TO IT BY THE PRESIDENT, WITH POWER ONLY TO PRESENT ITS OPINIONS TO THE PRESIDENT, WOULD BE A COSMETIC RATHER THAN A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY IN CHILE.

4. CARMONA SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE PASSIVELY TO
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ACCEPT THIS POINT OF VIEW. HE FELT DEEPLY THAT WHAT CHILE NEEDED

WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN A PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION, LEADING TOWARD NATIONAL UNITY. TO BE SURE, THE COUNCIL WAS DOMINATED BY PEOPLE OF PRO-JUNTA VIEWS. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, PROVIDE A FORUM FOR DEBATE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. EVEN THOUGH ITS SESSIONS MIGHT BE PRIVATE -- A POINT NOT YET DECIDED -- WHAT WENT ON IN IT WOULD BE RAPIDLY KNOWN THROUGHOUT CHILE. MEMBERSHIP GAVE CARMONA A OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS FOR A RETURN TO PARTICIPATORY GOVERNMENT. HE MIGHT BE RISKING HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, BUT HE FELT THAT HIS POSITION GAVE HIM SOME LEVERAGE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IF THE COUNCIL SEEMED LIKELY TO BE A FARCE, HE THOUGHT A THREAT BY HIM TO RESIGN SHOULD HAVE SOME INFLUENCE IN INCREASING ITS VITALITY.

5. CARMONA EXPLAINED THAT THE COUNCIL INTENDED TO MEET ONCE A WEEK. ITS FIRST TASK WAS TO WORK OUT RULES OF PROCEDURE. ALL DECISIONS, WHETHER OF PROCEDURE OR OF SUBSTANCE, HE SAID, WOULD BE MADE BY SIMPLE MAJORITY. THIS MEANS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ANY POLITICAL CONTEXT UNDER THE JUNTA, THERE WILL BE VOTING.

6. CARMONA SAID HE EXPECTED THE COUNCIL OF STATE TO BE IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED WITH THE PREPARATION OF A TOTALLY NEW CONSTITUTION TO REPLACE THE CONSTITUTION OF 1925. THE LATTER HAD PROVED INADEQUATE

UNDER IT, POLITICAL PARTIES HAD ACTED PREDOMINATELY IN THEIR OWN INTEREST, WITH NATIONAL WELFARE ONLY A SECONDARY CONSIDERATION. WE IN THE UNITED STATES HAD BEEN FORTUNATE IN THAT THERE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A SUFFICIENT DEGREE OF CONSENSUS BETWEEN REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS TO ENSURE THAT AT CRITICAL MOMENTS THE NATION'S INTEREST PREVAILED. THAT HAD NOT BEEN SO IN CHILE.

7. THE FIRST STEPS IN A REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION -- THE PRESENTATION OF NEW ARTICLES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND NATIONALITY -- WOULD BE COMPLETED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE COUNCIL OF STATE, SINCE THESE WERE TO BE PROMULGATED BY PRESIDENT PINOCHET ON THE JUNTA'S THIRD ANNIVERSARY, SEPTEMBER 11. BUT CARMONA EXPECTED THAT THE COUNCIL WOULD SOON BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE TO BE SET UP IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION. IF THE COUNCIL WERE GIVEN THIS TASK, DISCUSSION COULD BE VERY WIDE-RANGING INDEED. SUCH DISCUSSION WOULD PROVIDE A REAL FORUM FOR THE EXPRESSION

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OF POLITICAL OPINION, AND HE PERSONALLY INTENDED TO USE IT AS SUCH TO THE FULLEST EXTENT.

8. COMMENT: CARMONA GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF A MAN DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THE DILEMMA OF HIS POSITION. IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL HOW MUCH OF HIS THINKING REGARDING THE COUNCIL OF STATE IS WISHFUL, AND HOW MUCH REPRESENTS A THOUGHTFUL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF MAKING THE COUNCIL OF STATE A MEANINGFUL ORGANIZATION.

CARMONA WILL BE WORKING AGAINST VERY HEAVY RESISTANCE. IT WOULD BE PREMATURE, HOWEVER, TO RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE LINES CARMONA ANTICIPATES. AS SANTIAGO 4745 INDICATES, HIS VIEWS HAVE REMAINED UNCHANGED IN THE MONTHS SINCE HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE COUNCIL WAS DISCLOSED.
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